

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES**

**JANUARY 25, 2005**

**PRESENT:** Glenn Eberly (Arr. 7:10 pm), James Gage, David Hurley, Walter Moody, Jesse Amsel, and Shawn Costello

**ABSENT:** None

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Costello called the Ellington Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENTS: NONE**

**III. NEW BUSINESS:**

**MOVED (COSTELLO), SECONDED (HURLEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADD TO THE AGENDA: MARK JOYCE FROM FINANCE COMMISSION TO DISCUSS HELP AND HOW COMMISSIONS CAN WORK TOGETHER.**

**MOVED (COSTELLO), SECONDED (GAGE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADD TO THE AGENDA UNDER NEW BUSINESS, #4: JULIE GROSS FROM HOCKANUM RIVER/WATERSHED ASSOCIATION.**

**MOVED (COSTELLO), SECONDED (HURLEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADD TO THE AGENDA UNDER NEW BUSINESS, #5: DISCUSSION OF UPCOMING GRANTS.**

1. Mark Joyce discussion regarding ways to help and how commissions can work together.

Mark Joyse, Board of Finance member, came forward to discuss the commission's request for \$1.75 million for open space purchases. He explained that the board reviewed the request and thought it would be beneficial for the Conservation Commission to attend the next Board of Finance meeting on February 8, 2005.

2. Review of Proposed Age-Restricted Cluster Housing located on Windermere Avenue.

Attorney Walter Twachtman, counsel for the applicant, came forward to give a brief overview of the project. He noted that the subject project location is on the west side of Windermere Avenue and the two parcels total approximately 41 acres. The property is located in an industrial zone, but they are applying for a zone change to the Age Restricted Cluster Housing Zone.

Andy Greene, project engineer, reviewed the existing conditions plan, the concept plan, and the green space plan and report. He explained that the existing site is mostly cornfield, with the Hockanum River at its western boundary. Mr. Greene noted that the proposal is for 133 single family detached age-restricted units. He explained that they are proposing approximately 10 ½ of green space, with about 8 acres of the green space along the Hockanum River. Mr. Greene stated that there would be walking trails behind the units and along the river, which would connect to a sidewalk along Windermere Avenue.

Jay Fischer, applicant, explained that the Age Restricted Cluster Housing regulations state that there must be 20% green space, allowing ½ of the green space as wetlands and ½ as upland area.

Chairman Costello noted that the commission looks favorably upon open space in bulk areas, not areas that are landscaped and spread out. He stated that the trail system was a good addition to the plan.

**MOVED (COSTELLO), SECONDED (GAGE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADD TO THE AGENDA UNDER NEW BUSINESS, #6: FREEDOM RIDGE SUBDIVISION ON SOUTH ROAD.**

3. Advisory Recommendation for Purchase of Skipper Property, Porter Road, APN 124-002-0000.

Commissioner Gage presented a map showing the subject parcel and surrounding town and state owned parcels. He noted that the purchase of this parcel was strategic in filling in the open space corridor. Commissioner Gage stated that with this purchase, the grant money is all spent.

**MOVED (GAGE), SECONDED (COSTELLO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO RECOMMEND PURCHASE OF SKIPPER PROPERTY, PORTER ROAD, APN 124-002-0000 TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN.**

4. Julie Gross from the Hockanum River/Watershed Association.

Julie Gross, member of the Hockanum River/Watershed Association, explained that at the November Ellington Conservation Commission meeting, the commission suggested that she submit a letter of intent of the placement of the proposed trail along the Hockanum River. Ms. Gross noted that the trail basically runs along the river and at the Great Marsh, it will be further away. She did not have any maps showing the location of the trail.

Ben Moser, property owner, stated that he is in favor of creating a trail along the Hockanum River. He explained that he has offered land to the Town in order to promote recreation. Chairman Costello asked if Mr. Moser would be willing to write a letter of intent for the commission and was told yes.

Chairman Costello suggested Ms. Gross attend next month's meeting with a final letter of intent and maps showing the proposed trail. Commissioner Hurley suggested having the Town Planner produce maps of the area and Chairman Costello directed Ms. Gross to coordinate with Mr. Davis.

**MOVED (COSTELLO), SECONDED (HURLEY) TO ACCEPT PRELIMINARY LETTER OF INTENT THROUGH THE BOARD TO THE HOCKANUM RIVER ASSOCIATION. THE COMMISSION AGREED TO RECOMMEND THAT TOWN PLANNER TO FOLLOW UP WITH BEN MOSER AND JULIE GROSS.**

5. Discussion of Upcoming Grants.

The commission did not discuss this item.

6. Open Space Review—Freedom Ridge Subdivision, South Road.

Eric Peterson, project engineer, reviewed the project. He explained that the proposal is for an 8-lot subdivision on a parcel of approximately 12 acres. Mr. Peterson noted that they are proposing 2.4 acres of open space to be deeded to the Town. The open space area is wooded and includes some wetlands and a pond, and the detention basin. There would be access to the open space parcel from South Road.

The commission discussed the proposal. Reasons for not recommending taking the open space included that it would not connect to any other open space areas and that the Crystal Lake Elementary School has land available for recreational purposes.

**MOVED (COSTELLO), SECONDED (HURLEY) TO RECOMMEND TO THE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION FEE-IN-LIEU OF OPEN SPACE FOR THE FREEDOM RIDGE SUBDIVISION.**

**II. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

1. Discussion: Open Space Fee-In-Lieu

Commissioner Gage stated that he believes that when Mr. Gessay comes to resubdivide his property on Porter and Kibbe Roads, the Conservation Commission should suggest that another appraisal be conducted. He was concerned that the PZC allowed a fixed price for each lot that is subdivided off the mother parcel.

The commission discussed obtaining information regarding land transactions to track amounts that have been paid for land that is to be subdivided.

2. Status: Porter Road Open Space Purchases

Commissioner Gage noted that the grant money has all been spent with the purchase of the Skipper property. He stated that there are desirable parcels for sale, but he has no authority to pursue them and there is no money to purchase them.

The commission discussed what needed to be done if the Town allocated money for open space purchases. Commissioner Hurley suggested creating a list of potential parcels and approach the landowners.

Commissioner Gage noted that the commission had received a letter from Attorney Ryan asking if the Town would be interested in purchasing the Vecchiolla property on Somers Road. He explained that this property abuts the state forest, has a great ridgeline, and may have development pressures.

### 3. Commission Workshop on Open Space Plan

Chairman Costello stated that the last letter sent to the Board of Selectmen requesting the Town Planners time to complete the open space plan was explained to the board by the First Selectman that the commission wanted money to hire someone to complete the plan. Chairman Costello requested that members attend the Board of Selectmen meetings to discuss their disappointment with not being able to complete the plan and note that it is because the Planner has been directed to complete other initiatives before completing the open space plan.

Commissioner Gage suggested that the commission review the draft of the plan that he created and expand upon it at a workshop. Commissioner Hurley disagreed about having a workshop and stated that the Planner just needs a few days to complete the plan. Chairman Costello expressed his desire to have a workshop. Commissioner Hurley stated that the purpose of a workshop should be to prepare a presentation for the Board of Finance on 2/8/05.

**MOVED (COSTELLO), SECONDED (GAGE) FOR A COMMISSION WORKSHOP TO BE HELD WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2005 TENTATIVELY AT THE ELLINGTON LIBRARY.**

### III. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

#### 1. Discussion: Current Established Open Space Parcels

This item was not discussed.

#### 2. Election of Officers

Chairman Costello asked if the members wanted any changes in officers. There were no requests.

**MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (HURLEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ELECT SHAWN COSTELLO AS CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2005 CALENDAR YEAR.**

**MOVED (COSTELLO) SECONDED (AMSEL) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ELECT DAVID HURLEY AS VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2005 CALENDAR YEAR.**

#### 3. Budget Preparations for FY 2005-2006

Chairman Costello stated that this was already reviewed with Mark Joyse. Commissioner Hurley stated that the commission should come up with a list needs for the operating budget. The top priority was to have money for getting the open space plan completed and endorsed. Other important issues were money for appraisals to purchase open space and money for preparation of educational tools. The commission decided to discuss this further at the special meeting on 2/2/05.

4. Approval of the November 30, 2004 Meeting Minutes.

**MOVED (HURLEY), SECONDED (AMSEL) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 30, 2004 MEETING MINUTES.**

5. Discussion: Use of Open Space Land for Proposed Cell Tower.

Chairman Costello stated that the Board of Selectmen approved allowing a cell tower on town owned land. He noted that this item will be coming before the commission soon. Chairman Costello explained that this item should have come before the commission prior to the BOS meeting, per state statute. He noted that if the town is taking open space land, they must either give equal land or money to purchase more land.

Commissioner Hurley mentioned that the commission should consider getting formal approval to be the stewards of the town owned lands and to define the role and policy issues associated with being stewards.

6. Correspondence:

- a. Memo to PZC from Matt Davis, dated 12/17/04.
- b. Memo to Land Use Commissions from Matt Davis, dated 12/21/04.
- c. Letter to Steven & Tory Dombek from Attorney Boyan, dated 12/22/04.
- d. Email from Judy Preston regarding "LULA," dated 12/8/04.
- e. Environmental Management Bulletin, dated 12/2/04.
- f. CRCOG 2005 Legislative Agenda.
- g. The Habitat, Fall 2004.

Commissioner Moody stated that the Environmental Management Bulletin had grants available. He thought that the Hockanum River Trail would be a high priority and thought Julie Gross should be contacted regarding this grant opportunity.

Chairman Costello stated that although the Bulletin was dated 12/14/04, he just received it and the submission date for is on the 15<sup>th</sup>. He stated that the commission will be putting in an application and he would have the Town Planner complete it.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOVED (AMSEL), SECONDED (HURLEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 10:00 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Reanna Goodreau  
Recording Secretary